

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2666

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USDOC WASHDC

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3.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, BTIO, TC

SUBJ: ABU DHABI CIVIL AIRPORT - COOKING IN THE DARK

1. AIRPORT DE PARIS, CONSULTANT FOR ABU DHABI DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS (DPW) IS OPENING TENDERS IN PARIS FOR EXTENSION OF PRESENT TERMINAL FACILITIES. SEVEN SELECTED COMPANIES WERE QUIETLY INVITED TO BID ON THIS DH 120 MILLION (\$30.5 MILLION) CONTRACT, AND BID RESULTS WILL BE ANNOUNCED IN FEW DAYS.

2. ACCORDING TO LOCAL SOURCES, SEVEN FIRMS INVITED TO BID WERE: CONSOLIDATED CONTRACTING COMPANY (LEBANON); AL-KHARAFI (KUWAIT); RICHARD COSTAIN (U.K.); SANRAPT ET BRICE (FRANCE); STRABERG BAU (GERMANY); J&P (CYPRUS); AND SPIE-BATIGNOLLES (FRANCE).

3. UNFORTUNATELY - BUT ALL TOO TYPICALLY - U.S. FIRMS NOT INVITED TO TENDER FOR THIS CONTRACT, WHICH AN ESPECIALLY ATTRACTIVE ONE SINCE BEING BID ON BASIS OF COST PLUS RATHER THAN FIXED PRICE. ENTIRE DEAL WAS HANDLED VERY QUIETLY HERE, AND, THEREFORE, BIDDERS ARE USUAL CLUB OF ARAB AND EUROPEAN CONTRACTORS WHO HAVE INSIDE TRACK ON MOST LARGE CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS IN ABU DHABI.

4. AIRPORT DE PARIS IS ALSO PREPARING SPECIFICATION FOR
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AN ENTIRELY NEW CIVIL AIRPORT FOR ABU DHABI TO BE LOCATED

ON MAINLAND. HOWEVER, THERE IS STILL CONSIDERABLE DEBATE WITHIN ABU DHABI GOVERNMENT ABOUT WHETHER INVESTMENT IS ECONOMICALLY JUSTIFIED. PERSIAN GULF ALREADY HAS ONE OF WORLD'S DENSEST COLLECTION OF INTERNATIONAL AIRPORTS, AND ANOTHER ONE AT ABU DHABI COULD BE FINANCIAL DISASTER. BUT IN MEANTIME CONSULTANT IS CONTINUING WITH STUDIES, AND, IF GOVERNMENT APPROVES CONSTRUCTION, TENDERS WILL BE ISSUED IN JANUARY 1976.

5. AS A SIDELIGHT: AIRPORT DE PARIS HAS NO RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE IN ABU DHABI. WHEN PRESSED BY DPW TO APPOINT ONE, THEY MADE THE COMMERCIAL OFFICER OF THE FRENCH EMBASSY THEIR OFFICIAL COMPANY REPRESENTATIVE. EVEN ASSUMING AIRPORT DE PARIS IS QUASI-GOVERNMENT CORPORATION, SUCH A MOVE APPEARS BE GOING A BIT FAR IN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT OF TRADE PROMOTION. BUT AT SAME TIME IT HIGHLIGHTS EXTENT TO WHICH GOF SUPPORTING COMMERCIAL INTERESTS OF FIRMS IN MIDDLE EAST EXPORT DRIVE.

6. ACTION REQUESTED: USDOC PLS CONVEY THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE NEW AIRPORT PLANS (PARA 4 ABOVE) TO APPROPRIATE U.S. ENGINEERING AND CONSTRUCTION FIRMS. SINCE PROJECT STILL AT EARLY STAGE, SUGGEST IT NOT BE PUBLICIZED IN OPEN LITERATURE. IN VIEW OF CONSULTANT'S PAST PERFORMANCE, INTERESTED COMPANIES SHOULD BE AWARE THAT MUCH SELECTION OF CONTRACTORS WILL BE DONE WITH MINIMUM PUBLICITY IN PARIS, AND THAT THEY SHOULD FOLLOW PROJECT EITHER IN PARIS OR THROUGH REPRESENTATIVES IN ABU DHABI WITH GOOD CONTACTS IN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT.
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